



Zhou Jing outside her school, which is in a Beijing suburb. Below: a street near the school.

brought people like Yuan He's father to do hard manual labor for little pay.

"I Was Ashamed"

Zhou Jing, a sixth-grader, came to Beijing seven years ago from rural Anhui Province, one of China's poorest. Her mother is a janitor, and her father is a cook.

"They want to save money to send me to school," the 12-year-old told *JS*. "I was ashamed of their jobs when I was little. I thought they were doing low-class work. But I no longer think that."

Migrants are indispensable to China's progress, yet they still face discrimination. Many live in cities illegally, without the residency permits required by the government. Sometimes, bosses do not pay them.

Many parents must leave their children with relatives when they move to the cities to work.

Those who take their children must send them to unofficial schools with poor facilities and supplies.

The kids who talked to *JS* attend such a school—a complex of dusty, gray brick buildings on the outskirts of Beijing. Most of them know little about the contradictions and uncertainties surrounding China's rising influence. All they know is that their parents are doing difficult, dirty work in part so that their futures will be better.

"I want to have a career," said 11-year-old Wu Zhuangxuan, a fifth-grade boy whose family is also from Anhui Province. "When I grow up, I want to go back and build up my hometown. I want to help make it modern." *JS*

Think About It

1. What are some of the biggest challenges facing China today?
2. How might China's government change as the country becomes more of an economic superpower?

TEEN DIARY

A REPORT FROM CHINA



Will Horowitz, 16, of New York City, is studying in China this year. Here, he writes about a trip to Guizhou Province.

We drove about two hours into what seemed to be the middle of nowhere. I didn't see cars for the last hour of the drive—just peasants wading in the rice paddies. In the distance we could hear drums banging, but we didn't know who was playing them.

After about three hours of hiking, we arrived at a *Miao* [or *Hmong*] village called Gaoyan. When we arrived, the first group waiting for us was a line of about 50 children banging the drums and tambourines

that we had heard.

We came to a table set up by local women who offered us *mijiu* [a local rice drink], which we drank from ox horns. My friend and I explored the village. We just followed a random footpath—essentially, the only kind of path in this village. We found a pond, a massive bundle of chili peppers, and kids running around on a concrete surface with a rusty ring attached to a wooden post [their makeshift version of a basketball court].

We asked them if they played basketball, and one little kid ran to grab a ball before he could answer. He came back with an airless ball with holes in it, but it was a basketball nonetheless. The kids ran around and tried to throw the ball up, but they didn't seem to have much practice.



A Chinese child studies a photo taken by an American student.